

# *A Course in Miracles*

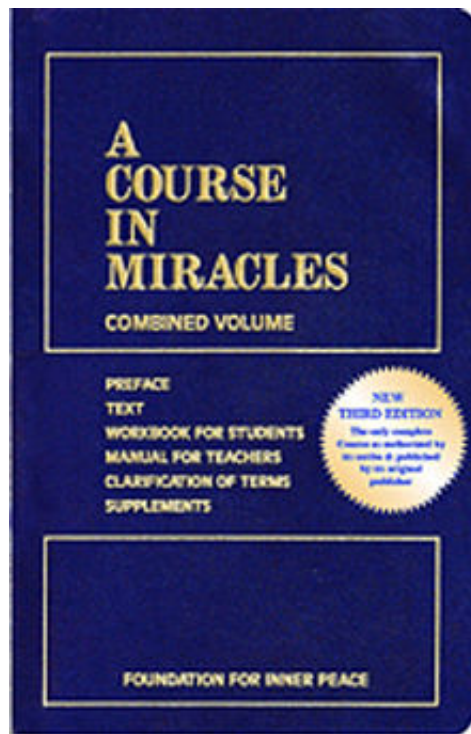
Page issues

***A Course in Miracles*** (also referred to as **ACIM** or **the Course**) is a 1976 book containing a self-study curriculum which claims to assist its readers in achieving spiritual transformation. The underlying premise of the work is the teaching that the greatest "miracle" that

one may achieve in one's life, is the act of simply gaining a full "awareness of love's presence" in one's own life.<sup>[1]</sup> The book was written, or "scribed," by Helen Schucman, who claimed that it had been dictated to her word for word via "inner dictation" which came from Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>[2][3]</sup> The Course contains a curriculum to bring about what it calls a "spiritual transformation," consisting of three sections entitled the "Text", "Workbook for Students," and "Manual for Teachers". Written, or transcribed, from 1965 to 1972, some distribution

occurred via photocopies before a hardcover edition was published in 1976 by the Foundation for Inner Peace.<sup>[4]</sup> The copyright and trademarks, which had been held by two foundations, were revoked in 2004<sup>[4]</sup> after lengthy litigation because the earliest versions had been circulated without a copyright notice.<sup>[5][6]</sup>

# ***A Course in Miracles***



*A Course in Miracles, Combined Volume, Third Edition as published by the Foundation for Inner Peace.*

<b>Editor</b>	Helen Schucman, <u>Bill Thetford</u> , <u>Ken Wapnick</u>
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<b>Author</b>	There is no author attributed to <i>ACIM</i> , although it was "scribed" by <u>Helen Schucman</u>
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<b>Country</b>	United States
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<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Subject</b>	<u>Transformation</u>
<b>Genre</b>	<u>Spirituality</u>
<b>Published</b>	1976 (New York: Viking: The Foundation for Inner Peace) 2007 (The Foundation for Inner Peace, 3rd ed.)
<b>Media type</b>	Softcover, hardcover, paperback MME, and Kindle, Sony and Mobipocket ebooks
<b>Pages</b>	1333
<b><u>ISBN</u></b>	<u>978-1-883360-24-5</u>
<b><u>OCLC</u></b>	<u>190860865</u>

Throughout the 1980s annual sales of the book steadily increased each year; however the largest growth in sales occurred in 1992 after Marianne Williamson discussed the book on The Oprah Winfrey Show,<sup>[4]</sup> with more than two million volumes sold.<sup>[4]</sup> The book has been called everything from "New Age psychobabble"<sup>[7]</sup> to "a Satanic seduction"<sup>[4]</sup> to "The New Age Bible".<sup>[8]</sup>

## Origins

*A Course in Miracles* was written as a collaborative venture between

Schucman and Thetford. In 1958 Schucman began her professional career at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City as Thetford's research associate.<sup>[9][10]</sup> In the spring of 1965, at a time when their weekly office meetings had become so contentious that they both dreaded them, Thetford suggested to Schucman that "[t]here must be another way".<sup>[11]</sup> Schucman believed that this interaction acted as a stimulus, triggering a series of inner experiences that were understood by her as visions, dreams, and heightened imagery, along with an

"inner voice" which she identified as Jesus. She said that on October 21, 1965, she believed that the "inner voice" told her: "This is a Course in Miracles, please take notes." Schucman said that the writing made her very uncomfortable, though it never seriously occurred to her to stop.<sup>[12]</sup>

The next day, she explained the events of her "note taking" to Thetford. To her surprise, Thetford encouraged her to continue the process. He also offered to assist her in typing out her notes as she read them to him. The transcription the next day repeated itself regularly for



many years to come. In 1972, the dictation of the three main sections of the Course was completed, with some additional minor dictation coming after that point. [13]



*Kenneth Wapnick helped edit the book and founded the Foundation for A Course in Miracles*

Fr. Benedict Groeschel, a Roman Catholic priest who had studied under Thetford and worked with Schucman,

arranged an introduction of Kenneth Wapnick to Schucman and Thetford in November 1972. Groeschel was given a copy of the *ACIM* manuscript in 1973 and testified that he was instructed by Schucman not to distribute the manuscript; however, with Schucman's permission, he made it available to Wapnick. Wapnick then reviewed the draft and discussed, with Schucman and Thetford, further revisions that he felt were needed in order to place the book in its final copyrighted and published form. Thetford then made a few further editorial decisions and

stipulations about the "Principles of Miracles" section, and soon afterwards opted to withdraw from being directly involved with any further major edits to the material. Wapnick and Schucman continued to edit the manuscript by deleting personal material apparently directed only to Schucman and Thetford, creating chapter and section headings, and correcting various inconsistencies in paragraph structure, punctuation, and capitalization.<sup>[14]</sup> This editing process was completed by approximately February 1975. Wapnick subsequently became a teacher of

*ACIM*, a co-founder and president of the Foundation for A Course in Miracles (FACIM), and a director and executive committee member of the Foundation for Inner Peace (FIP).

## Contents

The content of *A Course in Miracles* is presented in the three sections:

"Textbook", "Workbook", and "Manual for Teachers":

- The "Textbook" presents a thought system about truth and illusion on two levels:

- It states that *everything* involving time, space, and perception is illusory. It presents a nondualism which states that God is the only truth and reality: perfect, unchanging, unchangeable, extending only love, though not in time and space, which cannot really be comprehended from a dualistic perspective. The theory further states that all life as we perceive it is actually one life (because God has only one son, sometimes called the collective

sonship), dreaming of separation and fragmentation. It claims that eternity is outside time and space and that this dream never occurred in reality and is "already over", though not the (illusory) perception. When addressing the question of how such an illusory dream could arise from a perfect and unchanging God, the Course states that to ask that question is to presume that the time-space dream is real, which it states is not. *A Course in*

*Miracles* states that to think we exist as individuals is the fundamental error. However, since we experience ourselves in time and space, reading these pages, the course presents its thought system on a second level:

- The time-space level, or "perceptory" level, which is referred to as "the dream". *A Course in Miracles* states that this level was "made" by the "sleeping Son" as an attack on God. Furthermore, the "Son" is

regarded as not just Jesus, but as all collective life. In this time-space dream, perception is continuously fueled by what it originated from: separation, judgment, and attack. This results in what the Course calls the "sin-guilt-fear" cycle: we *sinned* by rejecting God and making a universe of time-space (the Big Bang); this results in *guilt* over our rejection of our Creator, and subsequent *fear* of God's wrath. The "sin-guilt-fear" is described as too horrendous



to face, and therefore subsequently projected out, so that to *Homo sapiens* it seems that evil is everywhere except in himself. The world becomes a threatening place, in which we are born only to fear, fight, and die. The thought that keeps this process going is referred to as "ego", or "the wrong mind". A *Course in Miracles* concludes that happiness cannot be found in earthly time-space life, and urges the reader not to commit suicide but rather to make a

fundamental mind shift from "condemnation-out-of-fear" (mindlessness) to "forgiveness-out-of-love" (mindfulness), since our "right mind" is outside time-space and cannot be harmed by worldly attacks. According to the course, seeing "the Face of Christ" in all living things is the way to "accept the Atonement" and ultimately awaken from the dream and return to the eternity of God. Ultimately, this means the end of individuality and of the ego. In this respect, there are

parallels with the Indian concept of karma and the Bhagavad Gita scriptures, which Helen Schucman reports that she was not familiar with, although William Thetford was.

- The "Workbook" presents 365 lessons, one for each day of the year, which claim to recondition the student's mind from "condemnation-out-of-fear" to "forgiveness-out-of-love". *A Course in Miracles* defines "miracle" as the conscious choice to make that mind shift, including its "non-observable effects on the minds

of others". The workbook lessons attempt to train the reader to see oneness in all living things for a steadily increasing time of the day. The lessons aim at convincing by experience. The core message of the workbook is that, to forgive oneself completely, a person must (a) forgive all living things, and (b) do this by instruction of the Holy Spirit (i.e., the "Voice for God," "right mind," "Inner Teacher," or "intuition"). At the end, after one year, the workbook states that it is "a beginning, not an end".

- The "Manual for Teachers" is a

collection of questions and answers. It aims at motivating the reader to become a "teacher of God": a human being living in time and space, but at the same time seeing oneness in everything, having let go of all individual and separate interests, and being fully guided by the "voice" of the Holy Spirit.

- In the third edition, the two pamphlets "Psychotherapy" and "The Song of Prayer" were added. They elaborate on the parallels with current psychotherapy and on the meaning of prayer, respectively.

# Foundation for Inner Peace and other editions

A limited edition release of 300 copies the first three sections of the book was published by The Foundation for Inner Peace, a publishing company that had been created solely to publish *A Course In Miracles*. In June, 1976, FIP published the first three sections of *ACIM* in a set of three hardcover volumes in a 5,000 copy run, along with the publication of the supplemental booklet *Psychology: Purpose, Process, Practice*. In 1985, FIP began publishing

a single volume containing all three of the first books in single soft-cover volume. In 1992, FIP published its second edition, a hardcover edition.

This revision incorporated some minor changes within the first three sections including some editorial content additions and the addition of a verse-numbering system, as well as addition of the "Clarification of Terms" section. At this time, FIP also released the publication of the supplemental *Song of Prayer* booklet.

In October, 2004, a long-standing

copyright battle over A Course In Miracles was decided with a ruling that put the work into the public domain.

In August, 2017, the Circle of Atonement published "A Course in Miracles: Complete and Annotated Edition", which contains the original material that Helen Schucman received up to 1972, and prior to it being edited by Schucman, Thetford, and Wapnick into the Foundation for Inner Peace edition.

## Reception



Since it first went on sale in 1976, the text has been translated into 22 languages.<sup>[15]</sup> The book is distributed globally, forming the basis of a range of organized groups.<sup>[16]</sup>

Wapnick said that "if the Bible were considered literally true, then (from a Biblical literalist's viewpoint) the Course would have to be viewed as demonically inspired".<sup>[17]</sup> Though a friend of Schucman, Thetford, and Wapnick, Catholic priest Benedict Groeschel has criticized ACIM and the related organizations. Finding some

elements of *ACIM* to be what he called "severe and potentially dangerous distortions of Christian theology", he wrote that it is "a good example of a false revelation"<sup>[18]</sup> and that it has "become a spiritual menace to many".<sup>[19]</sup> The evangelical editor Elliot Miller says that Christian terminology employed in *ACIM* is "thoroughly redefined" to resemble New Age teachings. Other Christian critics say that *ACIM* is "intensely anti-Biblical" and incompatible with Christianity, blurring the distinction between creator and created and forcefully supporting the

occult and New Age worldview.<sup>[20]</sup>

The skeptic Robert T. Carroll criticized *ACIM* as "a minor industry" that is overly commercialized and characterizes it as "Christianity improved". Carroll said the teachings are not original and suggested they are culled from "various sources, east and west".<sup>[21]</sup>

## Associated works

Two associated works have been noted as extensions of *A Course in Miracles*. Author Gary Renard's *The*

*Disappearance of the Universe*, first published in 2003, and Marianne Williamson's *A Return to Love*, published in 1992.<sup>[22][4][23][24]</sup> *The Disappearance of the Universe*, first published in 2003 by Fearless Books, was later republished by Hay House in 2004.<sup>[25]</sup> *Publishers Weekly* noted how Renard's significant examination of *A Course in Miracles* influenced his book.<sup>[26]</sup>

## See also

- Copyright on religious works

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- *Journey Without Distance: The Story Behind A Course in Miracles*. By Skutch, Robert (1996). Mill Valley: Foundation for Inner Peace. ISBN 1-883360-02-1. Discusses the pre-publication history of *ACIM*.
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- *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles*. By Williamson, Marianne (1996). New York: HarperCollins. ISBN 0-06-092748-8.
- *Understanding A Course in Miracles: The History, Message, and Legacy of a Spiritual Path for Today*. By Miller, D. Patrick (2008). Berkeley: Celestial Arts/Random House. ISBN 978-1-58761-312-8. A journalistic overview of the history, major principles, criticism, and cultural effects of *ACIM*.

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- *A Course in Miracles* at Curlie (based on DMOZ)

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